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Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Letter dated 29 May 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention that parliamentarians from around the world met in Stockholm from 23 to 25 April 2014 to review successes and challenges in achieving the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, adopted in Cairo in 1994. The sixth International Parliamentarians' Conference on the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development was organized by the Government of Sweden and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and provided another opportunity for lawmakers to reaffirm their commitment to keeping women's and young people's rights and sexual and reproductive well-being a priority in the post-2015 development framework.

The meeting in Stockholm focused on the links between population and sustainable development. In particular, the parliamentarians underlined the importance of protecting the rights of women and adolescents and of providing comprehensive reproductive health services and education on sexuality in order to promote economic growth and social development.

The conference, which coinciding with the twentieth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development, was part of several global initiatives in the context of the Programme of Action beyond 2014 process, which will culminate in the special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014, to be held on 22 September in New York.

Parliamentarians have long been actively engaged in advocating for the full implementation of the Programme of Action. Their role in establishing effective mechanisms for the review and oversight of government administration of the Programme of Action were both acknowledged at the International Conference on Population and Development and in the recent global survey report of the Secretary-

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General, entitled "Framework of Actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014" (A/69/62). That role was further recognized by the parliamentarians themselves at the recent International Parliamentarians' Conference, when they adopted the "Stockholm statement of commitment" (see annex).

Parliamentarians also committed to mobilizing their constituencies and governments to make bold efforts to ensure that the principles of the Programme of Action are fully integrated into the post-2015 global development agenda and that human rights, gender equality, women and young people are at its heart.

The Stockholm statement of commitment is one of the strongest outcomes of the Programme of Action beyond 2014 process and its contribution to the post-2015 discussions. In this regard, I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be distributed as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 14 and 118.

(*Signed*) Mårten **Grunditz**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 29 May 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Stockholm statement of commitment on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014

1. We as parliamentarians from all regions of the world gathered in Stockholm, Sweden, from 23 to 25 April 2014, to set a course of action for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014.

2. We meet at a time when the General Assembly of the United Nations, in its resolution 65/234, has decided to extend the Programme of Action beyond 2014 and has completed a review of the implementation of the Programme of Action "on the basis of the highest-quality data and analysis of the state of population and development ... taking into account the need for a systematic, comprehensive and integrated approach to population and development issues"; and has stressed the need to respond to "new challenges relevant to population and development and to the changing development environment", and to reinforce "the integration of the population and development agenda in global processes related to development".

3. We recognize the need for the full implementation of the Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation and acknowledge the findings and recommendations of the review (A/69/62), including from the global thematic meetings on youth, human rights and women's health, as well as the outcomes of the regional reviews, which constitute plans of action for the respective regions.

4. We stress the importance of the further implementation of the Programme of Action beyond 2014 on the basis of the findings and recommendations of the review, including the outcomes of the regional reviews.

5. We take note of the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014, to be held on 22 September 2014, and commit to work with our Governments to ensure that the outcome of the special session constitutes the basis for further implementation of the Programme of Action, and to integrate it into the post-2015 development agenda.

6. We recall and commend the positive contribution of parliamentarians towards the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action, including the work done by previous International Parliamentarians' Conferences on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, held in 2002, in Ottawa; in 2004, in Strasbourg, France; in 2006, in Bangkok; in 2009, in Addis Ababa; and in 2012, in Istanbul, Turkey.

7. We note that while progress has been made by our countries towards the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action, challenges remain to fully implement the Programme of Action and achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in particular target (b) of Goal 5, on universal access to sexual and reproductive health.

8. We also note that achieving inclusive economic and social development requires appropriate legislation, national policies and programmes that guarantee and promote human rights, dignity and equality for all.

9. We are concerned that despite the gains made in the past 20 years, these gains have not been experienced equally by all, and that a considerable number of people continue to live in conditions of extreme poverty, without the fulfilment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

10. We note that despite the vast possibilities created by digital communication tools, a great number of people lack access to these tools, thereby hindering their ability to benefit from the new economy.

11. We recognize the critical interlinkages between population and sustained economic growth and sustainable development and their central importance in addressing development challenges and priorities, particularly in improving the quality of life of all people without distinction of any kind.

12. We also recognize the importance of the above-mentioned interlinkages in eradicating poverty and social inequities; achieving universal access to quality primary and secondary education; achieving gender equality; achieving universal health coverage; improving maternal and child health; expanding family planning services of high quality, and access to a mix of modern contraceptive methods which take into account client choices and clinical needs; promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights; preventing and treating sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS; and eliminating gender-based violence as well as harmful practices against women and girls; and addressing the health and other impacts of alcohol and drug abuse.

13. We recognize the opportunity to shape the new international development agenda that will succeed the Millennium Development Goals by ensuring that the vision, principles, objectives and goals of the Programme of Action and the priorities emanating from the review of its implementation are reflected in the ongoing discussions on the Millennium Development Goals and on sustainable development goals and are integrated into the post-2015 development agenda.

14. To this end, we commit to mobilize our constituencies and Governments to support a post-2015 development paradigm based on human rights that ensures gender equality, women's and adolescents' sexual and reproductive health and rights, and comprehensive development for youth.

15. We call for targets and indicators on sexual and reproductive health and rights to be included in the stand-alone goals on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; for a universal health goal, including for universal health coverage; and for targets and indicators on the rights of young people, including investing in the quality of their education, in decent employment opportunities and effective livelihood skills, as part of the post-2015 development agenda.

16. We further call for the integration of population dynamics in all development planning at the national and subnational levels as a critical foundation for sustainable development, taking into account the need for a life cycle approach from birth to ageing, in order to ensure lifelong capabilities and resilience.

We Parliamentarians, consistent with the principles of the Programme of Action, are determined to play our role as legislators, as follows:

Policies, programmes and laws that promote and protect the rights of all

We commit to work to:

17. Enact and advocate for the enforcement of laws and policies to respect and protect the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all individuals;

18. Promulgate, where absent, and advocate for the enforcement of laws to prevent and punish hate crimes without distinction of any kind, and take active steps to protect all persons from discrimination, stigmatization and violence.

Policies, programmes and laws that promote and protect the rights of women and girls and young people

19. We commit to work to:

(a) Adopt laws to promote and protect human rights and eliminate discrimination without distinction of any kind;

(b) Design policies and programmes that harness the demographic dividend through enhancing the capabilities of young people to contribute to social and economic development and innovation;

(c) Promote access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for all persons, including quality health care and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, while removing legal, regulatory and social barriers to reproductive health information and services for adolescents, and ensure access to contraception as well as to a wide range of modern methods of family planning, and emergency contraception, as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO);

(d) Promote and protect the rights of young people to access a good quality of education at all levels, including comprehensive sexuality education, taking into account those young people who are out of school while also ensuring equal enrolment and retention of girls and boys in primary and secondary school and in higher levels of education;

(e) Support policies that keep the girl child, including married girls and pregnant girls, in school at all levels of education without discrimination, and ensure admission or re-entry to school after delivery;

(f) Promote effective policies and programmes that provide appropriate skills for young people, preparing them for employment and long-term decent work, consistent with international conventions;

(g) Promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and ensure women's full participation in political and decision-making processes;

(h) Promote the enactment and implementation of laws to ensure the economic and social empowerment of women through equal access to ownership and control of economic resources, technology and markets, including land, property and inheritance rights;

(i) Call for the enactment or ratification of global and regional legal frameworks that combat gender-based violence, and ensure the provision of sexual and reproductive health and rights services as part of initial emergency responses, revise laws that exonerate perpetrators of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, and eliminate sexual violence from conflict and post-conflict

amnesty provisions within the framework of strengthened legislation enforcement to end impunity, consistent with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000);

(j) Adopt legislation, policies and measures that prevent, punish and eradicate gender-based violence within and outside of the family, within communities, and in conflict and post-conflict situations;

(k) Promote legislation to eliminate child, early and forced marriage, by enacting and enforcing laws on the minimum legal age of marriage of 18 years; and eliminate harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting;

(l) Promote legislation to prevent adolescent pregnancy and unsafe abortion, including through enhancing the status of women and girls and addressing the negative social consequences of gender stereotypes, through comprehensive sexuality education for both boys and girls. This education must include accurate information taking into account scientific data and evidence about human sexuality, including: growth and development; anatomy and physiology; reproduction, pregnancy and childbirth; HIV and sexually transmitted infections; family life and interpersonal relationships; culture and sexuality; human rights protection, fulfilment and empowerment; non-discrimination, equality and gender roles; sexual behaviour; sexual abuse, gender-based violence and harmful practices;

(m) Work with governments on urgent, concrete measures to further reduce abortion-related complications and deaths by providing non-discriminatory universal post-abortion care that meets WHO guidelines; to remove legal barriers preventing women and adolescent girls from access to safe abortion, including revising restrictions within existing abortion laws, and, where legal, ensure the availability of safe, good-quality abortion services, in order to safeguard the lives of women and girls;

(n) Review and repeal laws that punish women and girls who have undergone illegal abortions, as well as end imprisonment for such acts, bearing in mind that in no circumstances should abortion be considered as a family planning method.

Budget allocations and enabling environment for implementing the Programme of Action

We commit to:

20. Advocate for the allocation of appropriate resources and create an enabling environment for implementing the Programme of Action and the recommendations of the review of the implementation of the Programme of Action beyond 2014;

21. Advocate for increased development assistance budgets for population assistance, and ensure the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) for official development assistance, as agreed at the previous International Parliamentarians' Conferences on the Implementation of the Programme of Action;

22. Advocate for policies and programmes with clear goals and budget allocations and indicators to measure compliance on human rights and fundamental freedoms;

23. Advocate for non-discriminatory universal, free, public, high-quality, intercultural education for youth, to ensure social inclusion and intergenerational resilience.

Strengthening parliamentary oversight

We will further work with our parliaments to:

24. Ensure stronger political commitment for the further implementation of the Programme of Action and the recommendations arising from the review thereof and will use our oversight role to keep Governments accountable to the commitments made;

25. Ensure that appropriate population, health, gender and development data, disaggregated, inter alia, by sex, age and disability, is made publicly available in order to facilitate the sharing and use of knowledge and improve public accountability;

26. Ensure effective oversight of programmes and work with our respective Governments to promote and facilitate the active participation of all constituencies, including non-state actors, in order to guarantee transparency and the rule of law and improved governance at the local, national, regional and global levels;

27. Hold our respective States accountable for the implementation of appropriate and transparent governance institutions and mechanisms that prevent and sanction human rights violations and which ensure that all victims, particularly victims of gender-based violence, have a right to reparation and justice.

Political commitment and building partnerships

We commit to:

28. Advocate for the role of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and youth groups in the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of population and development policies and programmes, including for achieving the goals concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights;

29. Promote strengthened partnerships with the private sector in the design, implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of population and development programmes and policies, in particular in the areas of service delivery and commodity production, security and distribution;

30. Hold our respective States accountable for the establishment of appropriate and transparent governance institutions and mechanisms that ensure effective participation, without any form of discrimination, of adolescents and young people in public debate, in decision-making and in all policy and programme phases, in particular on matters that affect them directly;

31. Ensure firm commitment to justice, transparency, integrity and equal participation in all governance processes, in a way that enables all to participate in the process of national development;

32. Promote and protect human rights and eliminate discrimination, without distinction of any kind, recognizing that human rights for all are key to achieving the goals of the Programme of Action;

33. Strengthen parliamentary cross-party networks at the country, regional and global levels, to facilitate the exchange of best practices and strengthen the effectiveness of parliaments and to achieve the commitments made at the International Parliamentarians' Conferences on the Implementation of the Programme of Action.

Pledge

We the parliamentarians from all regions gathered in Stockholm:

34. Call upon the General Assembly to act on the findings and recommendations of the review of the implementation of the Programme of Action beyond 2014 and to integrate them into the post-2015 development agenda;

35. Commit to systematically and actively monitor the progress and impact of our work through our national and regional parliamentary structures in partnership with United Nations partners, civil society and youth;

36. Express our determination to ensure that all individuals are entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, without distinction of any kind, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, in order to fully extend the principles of equality, dignity and rights to future generations and ensure sustainable development.